

Court Royal and Red Roofs Church Hill Road, Surbiton

TOWNSCAPE STATEMENT | AUGUST 2021

On behalf of William George Homes



Townscape Overview

Introduction

- 1.1 This Townscape Statement has been commissioned by William George Group. Its purpose is to consider how the proposed development at Court Royal and Red Roofs, Church Hill Road, Surbiton would respond to its local context and meet the requirements of an appropriately designed new development. In particular, the Townscape Statement will consider the height, scale, form and massing of the proposed development in its context.
- 1.2 The study will not consider the potential effects of the proposed development on the setting or significance of heritage assets, as a Heritage Statement has already been provided by Cogent Heritage in order to consider those effects. Where relevant the Townscape Statement will refer to the separate Heritage Statement.
- 1.3 The proposed development would provide 24 residential dwellings, comprising seven three-bed, ten-two bed and seven one-bed homes and would include associated car parking, refuse storage, cycle storage and associated landscaping.
- 1.4 The Townscape Statement draws on application material, including the scheme drawings and Design and Access Statement produced by Create Architecture. The design of the proposed development has been scrutinised through the pre-application process and through the Design Review Panel process. The designers of the building have responded positively to commentary received, as set out in the submitted Design & Access Statement.
- 1.5 This Townscape Statement has been produced by Icen Projects. Specifically, it is authored by Lewis Eldridge MAUD, MSc, Associate – Heritage and Townscape and Lucy Williams MAUD, Consultant – Heritage and Townscape.

The Local Context

- 1.6 Church Hill Road is set north-east of the principal core of Surbiton and has a distinct local character. It was developed later, as set out in the separate Heritage Statement, and includes fewer individual buildings and townscape of architectural or historic interest. Church Hill Road does not fall within a designated conservation area or an identified local area of special character. Set on the north side of Church Hill Road, the Site is visually separated from the Claremont Road Conservation Area to the west, which includes a short section on the west side of Adelaide Road. This is owing to intervening townscape elements, including the relatively tall apartment buildings at the Church Hill Road and Adelaide Road junction.
- 1.7 There are no listed buildings in the vicinity. The only locally listed building with a (limited) visual connection to the Site is St Mark's Church, which is located to the east and set significantly higher on the hill. St Mark's status as a non-designated heritage asset, rather than a statutorily listed building, reflects its substantial rebuilding, as set out in the Heritage Statement. In townscape terms it responds principally to the junction of Avenue Elmers, Church Hill Road and St Mark's Road.
- 1.8 The townscape on Church Hill Road, on the east side of Adelaide Road, and elsewhere close to the Site has changed markedly from the second half of the 20th century onwards. The construction of apartment buildings of four, five and six storeys has led to a significant change in character although it is notable that some of the 19th century residential development in the area is also substantial in size and volume. The development of such apartments, including for example Hatfield House at the east end of Church Hill Road, has changed the setting of the locally listed church over time, although it still retains primacy in westward views from St Mark's Hill. The most recent apartment development on Church Hill Road is St Mark's Court, which is located on a deep site with narrow frontage and subsequently extends south adjacent to the church tower.
- 1.9 The post war bungalow on the Site is out of character with the now established townscape, although it is noted that the two pairs of post-war semi detached houses to the immediate east of the Site, are also of a lower scale. At only one storey in height, the Site represents a 'gap' in a townscape which otherwise provides a well defined street edge and enclosure.



Figure 1.1 Apartment building typology on the east side of Adelaide Road



Figure 1.2 St Mark's Church, visible between apartment buildings on Adelaide Road.



Figure 1.3 Moray House, of six storeys on Adelaide Road, returning into Church Hill Road.



Figure 1.4 Stratton Court, of five storeys, at the junction of Adelaide Road and Church Hill Road.



Figure 1.5 St Mark's Court, located opposite the Site on the south side of Church Hill Road.



Figure 1.6 Hatfield House, to the east of the Site, at the junction of Church Hill Road and Avenue Elmers.

The Planning Framework

- 1.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) seeks the optimisation of the use of land and development densities in response to housing need. Section 12 of the NPPF sets out how well designed places are to be achieved in this context. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF sets out how planning policies and decisions should encourage developments that:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 1.11 The national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) amplifies this further, in relation to local character, stating that:
- Development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, local man-made and natural heritage and culture, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.
 - The successful integration of all forms of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective, irrespective of whether a site lies on the urban fringe or at the heart of a town centre.
- 1.12 On building form, the PPG states that “buildings can be formed in many ways, for example tall towers, individual stand alone units, long and low blocks, terraces. They can all be successful, or unsuccessful, depending on where they are placed, how they relate to their surroundings, their use and their architectural and design quality”. (PPG, 2014: Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 26-025-20140306).
- 1.13 On scale, the PPG states that “Decisions on building size and mass, and the scale of open spaces around and between them, will influence the character, functioning and efficiency of an area. In general terms too much building mass compared with open space may feel overly cramped and oppressive, with access and amenity spaces being asked to do more than they feasibly can. Too little and neither land as a resource or monetary investment will be put to best use” and “The size of individual buildings and their elements should be carefully considered, as their design will affect the: overshadowing and overlooking of others; local character; skylines; and vistas and views. The scale of building elements should be both attractive and functional when viewed and used from neighbouring streets, gardens and parks” and “The massing of development should contribute to creating distinctive skylines in cities, towns and villages, or to respecting existing skylines”. (PPG, 2014: Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 26-026-20140306).
- 1.14 On details, the PPG states that “The quality of new development can be spoiled by poor attention to detail. Careful consideration should be given to items such as doors, windows, porches, lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rain water details, ironmongery and decorative features. It is vital not only to view these (and other) elements in isolation, but also to consider how they come together to form the whole and to examine carefully the ‘joins’ between the elements. (Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 26-027-20140306).
- 1.15 On materials, the PPG states that “Materials should be practical, durable, affordable and attractive. Choosing the right materials can greatly help new development to fit harmoniously with its surroundings. They may not have to match, but colour, texture, grain and reflectivity can all support harmony”. (Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 26-028-20140306).
- 1.16 The National Design Guide (NDG, 2019) also forms part of the Government’s collection of planning practice guidance, and is based on policy set out in section 12 of the NPPF. Its purpose is to illustrate how “well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice”. The NDG “addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government’s priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics”. These represent specific, detailed and measurable criteria for good design.
- 1.17 The ten characteristics of well designed places set out in the NDG are:
- Context –enhances the surroundings.
 - Identity –attractive and distinctive.
 - Built form –a coherent pattern of development.
 - Movement –accessible and easy to move around.
 - Nature –enhanced and optimised.
 - Public spaces –safe, social and inclusive.
 - Uses –mixed and integrated.
 - Homes and buildings –functional, healthy and sustainable.
 - Resources –efficient and resilient.
 - Lifespan –made to last.
- 1.18 The ten characteristics reflect the Government’s priorities and provide a common overarching framework. They are based on the objectives for design set out in section 12 of the NPPF, set out above.
- 1.19 The new London Plan (adopted March 2021) includes, at paragraph 3.1.7, a useful summary of how to approach development in the London context. It states, “As change is a fundamental characteristic of London, respecting character and accommodating change should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Understanding of the character of a place should not seek to preserve things in a static way but should ensure an appropriate balance is struck between existing fabric and any proposed change. Opportunities for change and transformation, through new building forms and typologies, should be informed by an understanding of a place’s distinctive character, recognising that not all elements of a place are special and valued”.
- 1.20 London Plan Policy D3 ‘Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach’, Part A, requires

<p>all development to “make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites, including site allocations. Optimising site capacity means ensuring that development is of the most appropriate form and land use for the site. The design-led approach requires consideration of design options to determine the most appropriate form of development that responds to a site’s context and capacity for growth...”.</p>	<p>Experience</p>	<p>development proposal. These models, particularly 3D virtual reality and other interactive digital models, should, where possible, be used to inform plan-making and decision-taking, and to engage Londoners in the planning process”.</p>	<p>e. plot width and format which includes spaces between buildings</p>
<p>1.21 It states, in Part B, that “higher density developments should generally be promoted in locations that are well connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with Policy D2 Infrastructure requirements for sustainable densities. Where these locations have existing areas of high density buildings, expansion of the areas should be positively considered by Boroughs where appropriate”.</p>	<p>5. achieve safe, secure and inclusive environments</p>	<p>1.25 The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames’s Local Plan was adopted in 2012. It too includes policies relevant to assessment of design quality in context, include Policy CS8 Character, Design and Heritage; Policy DM10 Design Requirements for New Developments (including House Extensions); and Policy DM11 Design Approach.</p>	<p>f. building line build up, set back and front boundary</p> <p>g. typical details and key features such as roof forms, window format, building materials and design detailing of elevations, existence of grass verges etc.</p>
<p>1.22 It states, in Part C, that “In other areas, incremental densification should be actively encouraged by Boroughs to achieve a change in densities in the most appropriate way”.</p>	<p>6. provide active frontages and positive reciprocal relationships between what happens inside the buildings and outside in the public realm to generate liveliness and interest</p>	<p>1.26 Policy CS8 sets out how the Council will protect the primarily suburban character of the Borough, existing buildings and areas of high quality and historic interest from inappropriate development and will seek opportunities for sensitive enhancement in these areas and in areas of poorer environmental quality, where the character has been eroded or needs improving. It will use the Borough Character Study and Residential Design SPD to require good design and guide the assessment of development proposals and will seek to ensure that new development: recognises distinctive local features and character, has regard to the historic and natural environment, helps enhance locally distinctive places of high architectural and urban design quality, accords with Neighbourhood ‘strategies for delivery’ set out under ‘Character, Design and Heritage’, and relates well and connects to its surroundings.</p>	<p>1.28 Development proposals should also (amongst others requirements):</p>
<p>1.23 Part D of London Plan Policy D3 sets out design requirements for new development. It states that development proposals should:</p>	<p>7. deliver appropriate outlook, privacy and amenity</p>	<p>1.27 Policy DM10 Design Requirements for New Developments (including House Extensions), sets out how development proposals will be required to incorporate principles of good design. It sets out the most essential elements identified as contributing to the character and local distinctiveness of a street or area which should be respected, maintained or enhanced. These include the following:</p>	<p>m. protect the quality, character, scale and skylines of sensitive areas and safeguard strategic and local views</p>
<p>Form and layout</p>	<p>8. provide conveniently located green and open spaces for social interaction, play, relaxation and physical activity</p>	<p>a. prevailing development typology, including housing types, sizes and occupancy</p>	<p>p. ensure landscaping is an integral part of the overall design of all new developments and that landscaping proposals are submitted as part of planning applications</p>
<p>1. enhance local context by delivering buildings and spaces that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape, with due regard to existing and emerging street hierarchy, building types, forms and proportions</p>	<p>9. help prevent or mitigate the impacts of noise and poor air quality</p>	<p>b. prevailing density of the surrounding area</p>	<p>q. have regard to the public realm and to ways in which it can be enhanced as an integral part of the design of the development</p>
<p>2. encourage and facilitate active travel with convenient and inclusive pedestrian and cycling routes, crossing points, cycle parking, and legible entrances to buildings, that are aligned with peoples’ movement patterns and desire lines in the area</p>	<p>10. achieve indoor and outdoor environments that are comfortable and inviting for people to use</p>	<p>c. scale, layout, height, form (including roof forms), massing</p>	<p>u. optimise housing output consistent with the local context in accordance with London Plan policies</p>
<p>3. be street-based with clearly defined public and private environments</p>	<p>Quality and character</p>	<p>d. landscape setting and features</p>	<p>1.29 In addition to the above requirements, the Council will have particular regard to the significant contribution that existing private residential gardens make to (amongst other requirements):</p>
<p>4. facilitate efficient servicing and maintenance of buildings and the public realm, as well as deliveries, that minimise negative impacts on the environment, public realm and vulnerable road users</p>	<p>11. respond to the existing character of a place by identifying the special and valued features and characteristics that are unique to the locality and respect, enhance and utilise the heritage assets and architectural features that contribute towards the local character</p>		<p>v. the Borough’s suburban character and distinctive local context</p>
	<p>12. be of high quality, with architecture that pays attention to detail, and gives thorough consideration to the practicality of use, flexibility, safety and building lifespan through appropriate construction methods and the use of attractive, robust materials which weather and mature well</p>		<p>1.30 Policy DM11 Design Approach, sets out how new developments will be expected to be supported by a contextual statement that demonstrates a clear understanding and analysis of the local character of the area. The statement will also be expected to demonstrate how the new development will make a positive contribution to protecting and enhancing the local character of the area. The Council will resist any development that detrimentally affects the quality of the environment. The Council may adopt a more flexible approach to new development where the existing development lacks any identifiable or cohesive character and/or is located in a lower quality environment; in these circumstances it will seek a high quality development that creates its own distinctive character</p>
	<p>13. aim for high sustainability standards (with reference to the policies within London Plan Chapters 8 and 9) and take into account the principles of the circular economy</p>		
	<p>14. provide spaces and buildings that maximise opportunities for urban greening to create attractive resilient places that can also help the management of surface water.</p>		
	<p>1.24 London Plan Policy D4 ‘Delivering good design’, Part B, sets out that “Where appropriate, visual, environmental and movement modelling/ assessments should be undertaken to analyse potential design options for an area, site or</p>		

Townscape Overview

The Design Approach

- 1.31 In accordance with national, regional and local policy, the designers, Create Architecture, have developed a design approach which responds to the local character on Church Hill Road, including the presence of apartment buildings of four, five and six storeys. The proposal would be part of this prevailing character, filling the gap in the streetscape which is owing to the existing single storey structure on the Site.
- 1.32 The front elevation of the proposal is split into three parts, each a relatively narrow bay, in order to reduce its sense of scale and mass. These bays step up, by way of parapets of increasing height west to east, in order to respond to the rising gradient of the street. In so doing they reflect the approach of the adjacent semi-detached houses to the east. The bays follow an A-B-A rhythm, which is achieved through a subtle change in fenestration detail. The middle bay includes the front entrance to the building, which is accessed through a landscaped frontage, thus appropriately addressing the public realm.
- 1.33 The upper level of the proposal is set back, in order to reduce the visible mass in local views and ensure that the envelope of the building is not experienced as dominant in the streetscape. The flank elevations are carefully detailed and split into several parts in order to provide relief and avoid large scale areas of unremitting brickwork.
- 1.34 To the north, the rear of the building steps down to respond to the lower scale of the garden spaces between Adelaide Road and Avenue Elmers. It retains a garden space to the rear, ensuring that the built footprint of the proposal sits comfortably within the Site boundary.
- 1.35 The high quality red brick of the proposal, would also respond to the local context. A narrow hit and miss brick detail set within the window openings adds interest and texture to the elevation. Dark metal cladding at the upper level, animated with red window surrounds, helps to emphasise the setting back of the upper floor and serves also to reduce the sense of mass.
- 1.36 While the proposal will change the wider setting of St Mark's Church, the separate Heritage Statement confirms that this does lead to harm to the significance of the heritage asset. In particular, the

skyline of the proposal will not compete with the spire of the church in the streetscape.

- 1.37 The following images illustrates the role the proposal would lay in the street-scape on Church Hill Road.



Figure 1.7 Aerial view of proposed development set into the context of Church Hill Road, looking north.
Source: Vu City London 3D Model

Views Assessment

View 1: Adelaide Road, looking east onto Church Hill Road



Existing

Existing

This view is of a mixed townscape character, though with taller apartment and office blocks predominant in the foreground and background. Towards the middle ground are lower residential buildings, including the single storey Site buildings. The topography rises within the view, represented in the stepping of buildings, meaning a higher level of visibility of buildings in the background. The trees adds to the quality and interest of the street.



Proposed

Proposed

The proposed development can be seen beyond the existing apartment buildings in the foreground, which mark the junction between Church Hill Road and Adelaide Road. The building meets the existing build line to create a more uniform, continuous frontage. The set back roofscape contributes positively to the skyline in the view. Although not shown in the model, the flank elevations would be carefully modulated through design. The proposal would be partly obscured behind trees in summer views.

Views Assessment

View 2: On Church Hill Road, looking east towards the Site.



Existing

Existing

The existing view shows a suburban, residential streetscape, which is predominantly made up of apartment buildings, with lower residential development in between. The composition of the townscape of the view is of little value, although Hatfield House, at the top of the street, provides a striking skyline element. The street does not have a regular rhythm, however, plots generally have a common built line. There is a distinct 'gap' in the streetscape owing to the existing building.



Proposed

Proposed

The proposed development re-establishes a common building line and a more appropriate street enclosure. The height of the building responds to the pre-dominant apartment typology on Church Hill Road, while its upper element is set back and in a distinct material. The south elevation, which addresses the street edge, is broken into three bays which step up the hill. In reality the proposal will be pre-dominantly of red brick, responding appropriately to its local context.

Views Assessment

View 3: On Church Hill Road, looking west towards the Site.



Existing

Existing

This view looks north west, down hill towards Adelaide Road. Within the foreground are two pairs of semi-detached two storey houses, but otherwise the built form on Church Hill Road is generally made up of mid rise apartment buildings. The established building heights rise towards the background of this view, however, there is currently a distinct drop in height to the single storey building on the Site, and hence a 'gap' in the streetscape.



Proposed

Proposed

The proposal would fill the gap in the streetscape, providing improved enclosure and a more appropriate height in this local context. The proposal is broken up into a series of parts to reduce its sense of scale and mass. This gives rise to a modulated form which will contribute positively to both streetscape views and the skyline.

Views Assessment

View 4: At the north entrance to St Mark's Church, looking west towards the Site.



Existing

Existing

Moving further west, downhill towards the Site, there is greater tree coverage, which creates a more intimate feel and sense of enclosure in the streetscape. The built form is made up of fairly mixed, suburban typologies and has a fairly generic character. The existing Site does not contribute positively to the street scene.



Proposed

Proposed

The proposal would be a new element in the townscape of high quality. The volume and mass of the building would be broken down into a series of parts, in order to ensure that its presence is not dominant. The three narrow bays of the front elevation would be perceivable in this view, and as the viewer moves further west towards Adelaide Road. The textural qualities of the brickwork and the use of coloured windows in the upper storey of the building would add further interest in the view. Despite the more intimate feel of the street from this view position, the massing of the building is comfortable within this view.

Summary

Conclusion

- 1.38 The assessment undertaken in this Townscape Statement indicates that the proposal would fit appropriately into its context, and would contribute positively to local distinctiveness. It would be understood as part of the continuum of apartment development on Church Hill Road, which has most recently included the development of St Mark's Court, opposite.
- 1.39 The proposal would improve street enclosure on Church Hill Road, and address the 'gap' in the townscape which the existing building on the Site gives rise to. It would meet the building line, and includes an appropriate landscaped transition from private to public realm.
- 1.40 The scale and mass of the proposal would be broken into a series of elements, as illustrated in the tripartite front elevation, in the setting back and separate architectural treatment of the upper storey and in the modulation of the flank elevations. The proposal also steps down appropriately to the north, to meet the lower scale of garden spaces to the rear.
- 1.41 The massing of the building and the elements which make it up, would be attractive when viewed from viewing positions on Church Hill Road and Adelaide Road. The proposal has been designed to respond to the land form, including the rising gradient on Church Hill Road.
- 1.42 As has been set out in the separate Heritage Statement, the proposed development would do no harm to the setting or significance of heritage assets.
- 1.43 In summary, the proposal would be integrated appropriately into its local context, would enhance local townscape views and would contribute positively to the skyline. In townscape and character terms it has been designed in accordance with policy set out in the NPPF, the London Plan and the Royal Borough's Local Plan.



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